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ABSTRACT

As the most significant change agents in the school setting, principals must reestablish their educational leadership in order to effect significant program improvements. The Principals Inservice Program is designed to provide a continuous process of professional development. This approach is in contrast to the typical inservice program which consists of a smattering of unrelated activities that promote an awareness that is never put to practical use. The Principals Inservice Program has three phases. First, professional development is oriented around identification and pursuit of personal goals. A collegial support group helps the principal in this effort. Second, the leadership abilities developed in the first phase are applied to a practical improvement project in the principal's own school. Finally, the principal's experience is assessed and preparations are made to begin again with the first phase. (Author/PGD)

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PRINCIPALS INSERVICE PROGRAM

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The Principals Inservice Program is being developed with the cooperation of local school systems.

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Principals Inservice Program

Teachers, administrators, and researchers oftentimes claim that inservice education programs are ineffective, irrelevant, and a waste of time and money. Inservice education for principals can be characterized as a smorgasbord of opportunities splattered on the schoolhouse wall in a way which leaves principals trying to decide if the wall is part of a larger mural, a piece of abstract art, or perhaps an unwanted act of vandalism. In a non-metaphorical description, one might say inservice education is a hodgepodge of workshops and courses, the sum of which lacks a solid conceptual model. A review of the inservice education for principals (LaPlant) leads to the conclusion that it is usually topic-specific, oriented toward quick solutions, and based upon a diffusion model which assumes that awareness will lead individuals to apply these new understandings in the context of practice. In spite of the somewhat discouraging "state of the art," there are a number of reasons for the surge of interest in staff development in general and particularly for principals.

The decline in school-aged population translates into fewer opportunities for school systems to "hire" enthusiasm and new ideas. The professional development of present staff, consequently, assumes greater importance. At the same time, the research community is turning its attention from the assessment of educational "products" to the training and professional development needs of teachers and administrators (McLaughlin and Berman:1). This switch is due to the realization that new technologies, "validated" programs or more money do not in themselves cause improvement. Specifically, the "best" educational ideas in the hands of unmotivated or inadequately trained personnel are unlikely to fulfill their promise.

When change, and all program improvement implies change, is the concern, one can build a case for making the principal's role the focus of inservice efforts. The Rand Change Agent Study involving Title III, Vocational Education Part D, Title VII bilingual, and Right-to-Read projects revealed that neither the amount of money spent on a project, nor the particular technology, was consistently or significantly related to project success. Instead, the institutional support from administrators and the local choices about how to implement a project were among the most important in determining the outcomes of projects (McLaughlin and Berman:2). Their characterization of principals as the "gatekeepers of change" supports Sarason's notion of the principal as the "preserver of tradition" (Sarason:113). It is this writer's

contention that principals who are experiencing the press of accountability movements, the effects of collective bargaining, and increased community unrest are, or at least should be, searching for means to (re)establish the principal as an educational leader whose mission is to improve educational programs for children.

The Principals Inservice Program, as conceived in this paper, contains ideas about effective education, leadership roles, and change strategies arranged in a delivery system which encourages, sustains, and supports principals in continuous improvement activities, for themselves and for their schools.

This paper presents a supporting rationale for the program. Modifications will occur as new knowledge about the principal's role in educational improvement is realized and as a result of feedback from developmental field testing of the inservice program.

The principals inservice program uses the concept of a collegial support group as a means through which principals engage in personal professional development and school improvement processes. Prior to discussing program components, the underlying assumptions are presented. It is recommended that those interested in principals inservice check their own assumptions against the following statements.

1. There are principals who have the desire to improve educational programs for children and are willing to commit their professional energy to that goal;

therefore, the recruitment of program participants needs to be open and the individuals must choose to participate.

2. It is important that school systems approve and support improvement as a part of the principal's job description; therefore, appropriate prior support of the principals' participation will be sought.

3. The criterion for any activity is the improved educational program for children; therefore, any school improvement plan needs to affect what happens with students.

4. Principals operate in an environment which imposes obligations and expectations on them; therefore, principals must be able to convert these pressures into opportunities, or if that is impossible, at least be able to withstand those pressures which would be detrimental to quality education.

5. Learning is facilitated by interactions with those among whom there is developed a sense of trust and openness; therefore, the collegial support group is used to develop a climate of mutual support and stimulation of growth.

6. Principals are frequently active but lonely in that they are reluctant to seek advice/assistance from subordinates or superordinates. Additionally, conversations with peers can tend to be sporadic and superficial if there is a hidden but real spirit of competition; therefore, the collegial support group values each participant as an important partner in the process.

7. Learning takes place in a style appropriate to the individual learner; therefore, there will be alternate ways for principals to engage in the professional development and school improvement phases.

8. The collegial support group serves as a model of how to work with others, particularly in the improvement processes of planning, communicating, training, coordinating and evaluating; therefore, sharing with peers for the purpose of constructive criticism is a valuable resource.

9. Inservice is more than information gathering. It is participation; therefore, improvement efforts are monitored and shared with others.

10. Continuous improvement is applicable to inservice education as well as to the school's educational program; therefore, the Principals Inservice Program is not a "finished" product and will be developmental.

11. Any program needs to be implemented in a local setting. However, the improvement in the Principals Inservice Program will come about because of insights developed by analyzing many settings; therefore, the network of facilitators will be the collaborative link to improving the Principals Inservice Program.

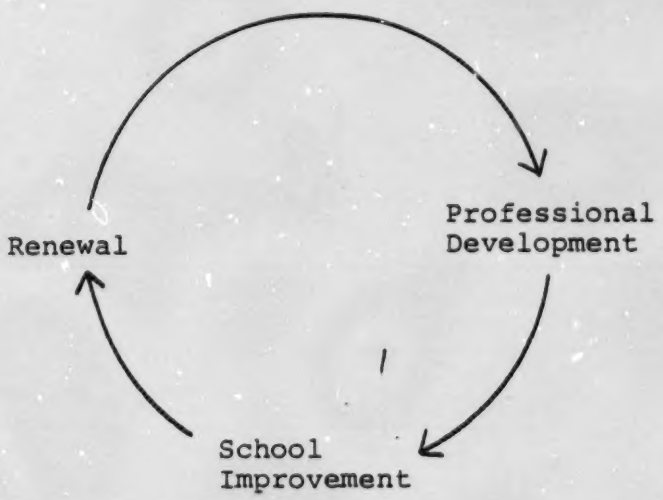
The goal of the program is to assist principals to improve their professional competence related to improving school programs for children. It is a two-step approach to school improvement. The inservice education of principals is an instrumental goal, i.e., it is a means to achieve the substantive goal of the development of youngsters (Sergiovanni and Carver: 36-37). The Principals Inservice Program, rather than assuming school improvement when principals develop awareness, includes the second step of assisting principals to engage in a school improvement project in which the principal is an implementor and a learner.

Elements of Program

The Principals Inservice Program consists of three phases which are sequential, but should not be thought of as segments which have lock-step starting and ending points because in practice they occur simultaneously. The use of the phase notion is to provide a focus for activities at any given time, but not to the exclusion of the other phases.

The three phases are (1) professional development, (2) school improvement and (3) renewal. These phases are intended to be part of a continuous process and, therefore, would be unending in their institutionalized form.

Figure 1 Principals Inservice Program as a Continuous Process



A brief description of the collegial support group concept and the three phases helps clarify the interdependent nature and cohesiveness of the program.

The collegial support group is a group of six to ten principals plus a facilitator which meets regularly for the purpose of openly exploring problems which demand solutions. In a climate of openness, trust, and mutual assistance, principals become resources for ideas and peer review in the professional development and school improvement efforts.

The professional development phase starts with needs-assessment activities which help principals to identify personal professional development goals. One method used is an inventory of competency needs based upon a beginning competency matrix. The matrix has several themes which are illustrative of the principal-leader role. The collegial support group assists individuals to clarify objectives, develop plans, identify resources and obtain constructive peer review.

The school improvement phase commences when the principals feel "comfortable" enough to systematically engage in an improvement project in their own schools. In this phase the inservice program focuses on the principal's role in the improvement processes, i.e., planning, communicating, training, coordinating, and evaluating. The group also becomes a place where principals can exchange ideas, gain peer support and critique individual plans. Although this phase involves individual school improvement projects, the group provides a

forum where individuals can also learn through the experiences of colleagues as well as from their individual projects.

The renewal phase is open-ended, but it is important to identify it as a separate activity. The renewal phase consists of an analysis of the professional development and school improvement experiences, a consolidation of what was learned, and a reassessment of beginning competency matrix utility and any needed modifications. The renewed matrix becomes the "ideal" for the next principal-inservice cycle. The group is then ready to start again with the professional development phase. Another activity of the renewal phase is the sharing of perceptions about the Principals Inservice Program among the network of facilitators sponsored by /I/D/E/A/. The network will also be a source of information about such things as effective training modules and improvement projects.

Goals/Outcomes

The intent of the Principals Inservice Program is to assist principals to improve their professional competence related to improving school programs for students. Since the program presents a beginning "ideal" but also recognizes that effectiveness involves a "state of becoming," it may be useful to express the goals as process outcomes, i.e., outcomes which indicate what principals will be doing when they are successful in the program. The proposed outcomes are:

1. Personal Professional Development Outcome

   The principal, as a member of a collegial support group, designs, implements, and evaluates a personal professional development plan to increase his/her leadership capability.

2. School Improvement Outcome

   The principal, as a member of a collegial support group, designs, implements, and evaluates a school improvement project to address an identified need within the school.

3. Collegial Support Group Outcome

   Members of the collegial support group provide assistance and encouragement to one another as they engage in their professional development and school improvement efforts.

4. Continuous Improvement Outcome

   The principal accepts responsibility for the achievement of personal professional development and school improvement goals.

The outcomes provide the framework for the activities which occur in the collegial support group. Through a combination of sequenced processes and group generated activities, the collegial support group becomes a peer review and resource panel.

In summary, the Principals Inservice Program is the synthesis of the "best" aspects of different change strategies into a program which provides for individual professional competency development, a support system for principals to engage in school improvement projects, and a renewal of ideas about the principal's role in the improvement of education.

Professional Development Phase

The professional development phase commences after entry into the school system has been achieved and approval given by proper authorities, most often the Superintendent and Board of Education. It is carried out in the context of the collegial support group. This group consists of six to ten principals plus a facilitator. The steps are similar to the activities within a school learning community in that a needs assessment is performed, goals established, learning activities are chosen based upon group and individual needs, and the process continues until participants are competent in the areas identified in the beginning Leadership Competency Matrix.

In order to have the collegial support group function effectively, some attention must be given to team building and group processes. Therefore, the first activity after the identification of the participants in any school system will be a "We Agree" workshop. The collegial group will include an external person who is not a principal but whose role will be that of facilitator--process observer--resource person. This facilitator would preferably come from outside the system, but be knowledgeable of the system's operation and the role of a principal. The purposes of the "We Agree" workshop are two-fold: (1) to get the groups established on the right path regarding communications, group techniques, and the valuing of diverse ideas and (2) to develop some clarity about individual and group beliefs regarding educational issues. A more subtle objective is to incorporate the facilitator role into the group process during the workshop. The closing activity of the "We Agree" workshop will be the introduction of the Leadership Competency Matrix (Figure 2) and setting up a process for doing a personal needs inventory. The beginning competency matrix represents the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed by principals who would be leaders in school improvement. These are divided into different kinds of abilities--conceptual, technical, and human abilities. The matrix represents a starting point for describing the "ideal" principal-leader. It is designated as such, because it is neither

Figure 2

Leadership Competency Matrix

Abilities \ Outcomes	Knowledge - Understandings	Skills - Practices	Attitudes - Temperament
Conceptual -			
Ability to see the school's educational program as a whole rather than as fragmented parts.	1) Understands the role of education in the context as past developments, present responsibilities, and future potentialities.	1) Articulates the concept of education and the expectations of various publics.	1) Is open to new interpretations of the educational mission.
	2) Understands the process of change in a school organization.	2) Communicates with those involved in the change process.	2) Insists that the individual child be the primary benefactor of any changes.
	3) Has an awareness of the organizational climate.	3) Provides a facilitative environment.	3) Encourages all individuals in professional growth efforts.
	4) Knows how to find and define problems.	4) Analyzes situation to establish goals.	4) Accepts constraints while seeing the potential in situations.
	5) Develops a sense of the principal's mission in instructional improvement.	5) Performs the leadership function in the improvement process.	5) Keeps improvement as a continuous goal.
Technical -			
Ability to use the methods, processes, and procedures of education and change.	1) Knows school district, state, and federal goals, policies, and procedures.	1) Translates district, state, and federal requirements into meaningful action steps for school.	1) Recognizes the environmental context of schools.
	2) Knows of educational programs that are available or are being developed.	2) Appraises available programs for possible utilization.	2) Constantly on lookout for new ideas.
	3) Understands the benefits to be derived from decision-making involvement.	3) Operates in a shared decision-making mode.	3) Accepts responsibility for decision-making role.
	4) Selects an appropriate change model for the situation.	4) Develops short- and long-range strategies for improvement.	4) Is flexible in adjusting plans to new information.
	5) Understands the formative and summative natures of program evaluation.	5) Uses data-based evaluation techniques.	5) Sees evaluation as a step in the improvement process.
Human -			
Ability to work effectively and efficiently with others.	1) Understands the functioning of groups.	1) Performs different roles in groups.	1) Gains satisfaction in the group's accomplishment.
	2) Knows how and when to engage in leadership behavior.	2) Achieves goals while showing proper consideration of people involved.	2) Values the contributions of group members.
	3) Has a healthy perspective of the limitations and potential of individual growth.	3) Recognizes the needs of others and of self in interactions.	3) Feels good about self and appreciates others.

exhaustive nor totally defensible in the sense that these ideas are research validated. However, the matrix does represent ideas gleaned from literature about leadership, change, organizational development, problem solving, and humanistic education.

There are several themes which appear in the competency matrix. The themes are related to individualization, change strategies, group processes, organizational effectiveness, internal and external school environment, and program evaluation.

Following the personal needs inventory, each principal identifies professional development goals and creates a plan to achieve them. This personal professional development plan will specify the learning objectives, the evidence which will be accepted for determining achievement, the activities to be used in the development process, an implementation time line, and an evaluation plan.

These plans are shared and constructively critiqued by the collegial support group members. This sharing process provides for clarification of ideas, an expansion of potential learning resources, and a means of peer support for the principal's professional development plan.

When the collegial support group determines they are "ready" or feel reasonably comfortable with their state of readiness on the competency matrix, the group starts the school improvement phase.

School Improvement Phase

During this phase, each principal focuses on his/her responsibilities while applying the administrative processes to the problem solving model of change (Havelock). The processes of planning, communicating, training, coordinating and evaluating are used by the principals as they work with appropriate individuals and groups to improve some aspect of their school's educational program. The collegial support group continues to provide a climate for the exchange of constructive suggestions and peer review of the project.

The school improvement phase intends to have the principal complete a limited objective first and to follow its completion with a second school improvement cycle once the processes are "in place." An important aspect of the school improvement phase is the institutionalizing of the improvement processes; the important by-product of this phase is the actual school improvement which is generated.

The five improvement processes are described below:

Planning: The broad view of planning includes a needs assessment or investigation of conditions and operations related to the broad purposes of the institutions, determing goals and specifying objectives, considering possible alternatives and developing strategies, recommending actions to be taken and making long-range decisions. Relative to the principal's role, planning in this sense might be done in order to begin a school improvement project which has implications for long-range directions. This type of planning might also be utilized when decisions which have tremendous impact are made elsewhere and the need is for an implementation plan.

Communicating: Given the planning process which results in clear goals and objectives, the next step is to communicate the decision along with any information required to build support for the proposed change and to have the plan implemented. Concepts such as communication theory, the school as a social system, informal organization, and organizational climate take on new meanings as the principal analyzes his/her specific communications which must be accurately and effectively performed if the principal is to achieve the organizational goals through the efforts of others.

Training: An essential element in the change process is providing necessary inservice education for those engaged in the improvement plan. Too often, attempted innovations fail because of the lack of adequate knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the staff members implementing the proposed change. This is especially true in education because of the intensive, interpersonal nature of the field. The training involves all the staff personnel tasks; such as, recruiting, selecting, assigning, orienting, and evaluating, as well as motivating the staff. The inservice education model being used with principals can become a model for staff development.

Coordinating: Coordinating expresses both the power and the limitation inherent in the principal's role. Given the plan for improvement supported by those who have been prepared to implement it, the principal must now supervise implementation. The process of coordination implies a shared decision making operation rather than one where command or control is the dominant mode of behavior. The principal-leader will see that the approved plan gets implemented by using various skills; such as, flow charting, network analysis and other management tools. The important idea is that the organization has adopted the plan and assigned task completion to the administrator. The "getting it done" is accomplished by coordinating the efforts of

those involved. Therein lies both the "power" and "limitation" of the principalship. Effective coordination makes implementation truly a team operation--one cannot do it alone.

Evaluating: The final improvement process is the determination of the worth of the implemented change. Evaluating includes reviewing plans and objectives, obtaining data regarding inputs, processes, and outputs, interpreting data, drawing implications for the future, and reporting results. All of this should provide useful information for making more informed decisions.

The improvement processes closely parallel the problem solving methods, and yet within each process is a mini-problem solving procedure. The improvement processes of planning, communicating, training, coordinating, and evaluating are continuously recycled and the intent is that these processes will become a way of life. The processes assume a school improvement goal and provide a structure to achieve that goal. The improvement processes combine the linking role of principals (Lipham) and the "ideal" role of a principal oriented toward continuous improvement as described in the Leadership Competency Matrix.

Renewal Phase

The renewal phase requires an analysis of the experiences in the professional development and school improvement activities so that those aspects which lead to success in either category can be identified and reinforced, and those aspects which do not contribute to success can be identified and remedied. Inherent in the renewal phase is the potential modification of the competency matrix.

The renewal phase is analogous to the evaluation process of the school improvement project except the center of the evaluation is the Principals Inservice Program. The renewal phase is formative evaluation because improvement is a continuing process and the renewal phase leads into the next cycle of professional development and school improvement. Renewal is important in the sense that the creation of self-reliant learners is an evolving process in which not only the learners are recycled, but the system itself is in a state of "becoming." This state of "becoming" makes it difficult, if not impossible, for one to conclude that he/she "has arrived" or has completed the program.

Project Activities

The conceptualization of the Principals Inservice Program in part is the result of experimental activities with three groups of principals representing urban, suburban and rural districts in Southwest Ohio. The three groups, totaling 26 principals, engaged in a two-day total group inservice experience prior to meeting on a regular basis in their small groups. The eight collegial support group sessions were used to develop and test techniques to help the principals design and implement personal professional development and school improvement plans. /I/D/E/A/ and area university observers assisted in clarifying ideas, critiquing agendas, and providing post-session comments. A set of experimental materials will be utilized and further refined in collaboration with ten field test sites in the 1979-80 academic year.

The sequence of events during the field test year is as follows:

1. The ten local site facilitators will engage in a two-week training session starting August 6. This training will establish the ten facilitators as a collaborative network, explore the program components and provide clinical practice in the program activities.

2. Each local site facilitator will have a 2 and 1/2- to 3-day session with the principals who will be forming the collegial support group. The session will focus on team and group skills.

3. Each collegial support group will meet on a monthly basis for 5 and 1/2 hours. The support group will use the experimental materials and processes to achieve the program outcomes.

4. Each collegial support group will provide feedback to /I/D/E/A/ staff members through the facilitator and other structured information gathering means.

5. Each collegial support group will develop their plans for the second year of the program based upon their experience.

6. Widespread implementation strategies including revised materials and facilitator training will occur in the spring of 1980.

Field Test Sites

1. The local district or agency would give appropriate approval for participation in the program.

2. Each site would have a group of six to ten principals and an /I/D/E/A/-trained facilitator to implement the Principals Inservice Program.

3. The facilitator would work closely with /I/D/E/A/ to provide information relevant to the implementation, formative evaluation, and further development of the program.

4. /I/D/E/A/ will provide the training for ten local-site facilitators. This training will be clinical in nature and will be two weeks in duration. Training and materials expense will be provided by /I/D/E/A/. Transportation and living costs will be the responsibility of the local agency.

5. Local implementation expenses, other than the experimental materials furnished by /I/D/E/A/, will be paid by the local participating district or system. Local expenses might include such items as mileage to sessions, meeting expense (space and/or lunch), and materials used during sessions or in improvement projects.

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